

In the Specification:

Please replace the paragraphs with the following rewritten paragraphs on the pages specified:

Page 1, Paragraph 1:

B₂ The present invention relates to a back protector, in particular for motorcyclists.

Paragraph 3:

B₃ These elements are applied to the motorcyclist's suit and generally comprise an outer shell constructed of substantially rigid plastic, an inner layer able to absorb the impact energy, and a layer of soft material provided with means for fixing it to the suit.

Paragraph 4:

B₄ With regard to back protection, belts are known in the form of a band provided at its rear with a plurality of substantially rigid elements, each consisting of a plate arranged vertically and aligned with a partial overlap between each plate and the adjacent plate.

Paragraph 5:

B₅ In the motorcyclist field the objective is to achieve maximum protection of that part of the spinal column comprising the spinal cord, because of the seriousness of possible injury in that

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anatomical region. As to the vertebrae associated with the spinal cord which includes the thoracic vertebrae (as far as the twelfth) and the first two lumbar vertebrae, i.e., a position which for an individual of average height extends a few centimeters above the waistline, the belt provides protection in this anatomical region.

Paragraph 6, extending to Page 2

B6
However, as the protective action preferably also extends to the remaining portion of the spinal column, i.e., to the remaining lumbar vertebrae, such back protectors extend below the waistline to also cover part of the glutei.

Page 2, Paragraph 2:

B7
However, this protection system has the drawback that the rigidity of the structure opposes lateral flexure of the trunk and forward and rearward bending, thus interfering with the movements required during driving.

Paragraph 3:

B8
EP-A-0 212 206 discloses a plurality of plates which are placed in overlapping relationship in an elongated array extending along the spinal column or other body area to be protected. The plates are pivotally interconnected by joints which allow relative rotation to a limited extent between the plates and limited longitudinal movement between the plates so that the armor

B₈
structure conforms to body changes during normal movements. Over extension is prevented by abutment of the plates against each other, limiting harmful movement of the protected body portions.

Between Paragraphs 3 and 4, add the following subtitle:

Summary of the Invention

Delete the title: BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Paragraph 4:

B₉
An object of the present invention is to eliminate these drawbacks by providing a back protector for the spinal cord and glutei of the spinal column which allows free lateral flexure of the trunk and forward bending but only moderate rearward bending, while always performing its protective function.

Paragraph 5:

B₁₀
This and further objects which will be apparent from the ensuing description are attained according to the present invention by a back protector, in particular for motorcyclists, comprising two vertically aligned supports provided with means for their being fixed to a motorcyclist's body, each of said supports carrying a plurality of substantially rigid elements

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Concl'd fixed thereto, said lower support being hinged to said upper
support by a pin.

12/10/01 Page ³~~6~~, Paragraphs 1 - 8:

This invention is described in detail hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

B11 Figure 1 is a schematic view of a protector according to the present invention.

Figure 2 is a front view thereof,

Figure 3 is an enlarged cross-sectional view taken along line III-III of Figure 2,

Figure 4 is an enlarged cross-sectional view taken along line IV-IV of Figure 2, and

Figure 5 is an enlarged cross-sectional view taken along line V-V of Figure 2.

DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

As can be seen from the figures, the back protector according to the present invention comprises a substantially elliptical upper element 2 extending through a length such as to cover the thoracic

vertebrae and the first two lumbar vertebrae, and an underlying element 4 of a length sufficient to cover the remaining lumbar vertebrae and part of the glutei.

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In particular, the element 2 consists of a layer of soft expanded material 6 provided with braces 8, an intermediate layer 9 of soft material able to absorb the impact energy, and a plurality of superimposed plates 10 (four in the illustrated example), the inner surface of each plate comprising a plurality of ribs 12 which mutually intersect to form a honeycomb structure and define a grid of ribs.

Page 4, Paragraph 1:

B12
Each plate 10 has a depressed lower end portion 14 on which the upper end 16 of the underlying plate is superimposed.

Paragraph 6:

B13
From the foregoing it is apparent that the protection element of the present invention not only provides total protection to the vertebrae of the spinal cord and of the gluteus part, but also, by virtue of the hinging of the two parts and of the hinging between adjacent plates, enables the bust to flex laterally and to bend forward and backward.

Paragraph 7:

§13 Braces and belts have been used in the illustrated embodiment, however, the present invention also allows for the use of support means in the form of buttons, zip fasteners and any element enabling the back protector to be applied to a jacket, a suit or any other article of clothing.
